

Praying on Gravel

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Not yet March, already weeds
bring me to my knees
with trowel and bare fingers.

Under the loblolly
the hellebore are in bloom,
a periwinkle or two. The weeds

are in the white gravel
of the walk. My son has written—
another unexpected death.

On all fours I work down the path,
uprooting weeds, smoothing
gravel. I'll write my son

a letter back—it's how we talk
best, considered word for
considered word.

Perhaps I will thank
the weeds for bringing me down
where I've the time to seek

wisdom in the river gravel.
What words are good enough? My son
thought of the Vulgate's *non*

timebo malum, I will fear no evil.
I do not fear the weeds.
But I fear this prayer a little.